



U.S. Senator Judd Gregg, Chairman

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

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D.C. STUDENTS WIN WITH PROGRESS ON SCHOOL CHOICE INITIATIVE

Gregg Commends House, Senate for Action on School Choice

Washington, DC – Today Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions praised both the House and the Senate for the recent action taken on bringing school choice to the District of Columbia.

Yesterday the Senate Appropriations Committee approved an amendment to the D.C. Appropriations bill that will create a program to improve the quality of education in the District of Columbia. The program would give low-income parents the right to choose where their children go to school by offering scholarships of up to \$7,500 to pay for tuition and fees to attend their choice of private schools. Today on the House floor, a similar school choice plan was passed.

“This is the beginning of the end for children trapped in under-performing D.C. schools. With the support from D.C. residents, local leaders including Mayor Anthony Williams and Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle, we maybe able to finally say to D.C. students that help is on the way,” said Senator Gregg.

“Support for the D.C. school choice initiative has been built from the ground up. Parents of children trapped in failed D.C. schools have spoken out for an alternative. Poll after poll show that parents are fed up with the performance of their public schools and want some other option. Local leaders this year have voiced similar sentiment. Mayor Anthony Williams, School Board President Peggy Cafritz, and D.C. Councilman Kevin Chavous have worked with us to develop our plan’s three-sector approach to improve D.C. education for all students. Finally now, after the groundswell of support, both the House and the Senate are beginning to listen,” said Senator Gregg.

“No child should be left behind in a failing school. Every parent, especially those with low incomes, ought to be able to send their child to the school of their choice. The fate of the D.C. school choice initiative on the Senate floor is uncertain, but by working together, I think we can put national politics aside and put the parents and children of the District of Columbia first. Good progress has been made on this measure and I hope we can soon get it to the President’s desk,” said Gregg.

Summary of the Senate D.C. Appropriations Bill's Three-Sector Approach:

- The D.C. Appropriations bill includes three vital school reform efforts aimed at providing high quality education for all the District's needy children. Specifically this bill provides \$40 million for targeted increases for the DC public schools, DC public charter schools, and the new scholarship program for low-income children trapped in consistently under-performing-schools.
- The increases for the District's public schools will be used for principal and teacher recruitment and retention, as well as efforts to promote student achievement, including supplemental services, public school choice and other 'No Child Left Behind Act' reforms.
- The increased funds for charter schools will be used to provide direct loans for successful charter schools for the purpose of purchasing, constructing or renovating facilities. These funds will also be used to create five new charter schools in the District neighborhoods in need of urban development.
- Funds will also be provided to the Secretary of Education to establish a scholarship program for low-income district students trapped in consistently under-performing public schools enabling them to attend private schools within the District of Columbia. Scholarships of up to \$7,500 will be offered to these families to pay for tuition and fees to attend their choice of private schools

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